

New Congress

Meet and Organize

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Explanation of the committee organizational meetings at the start of a new Congress.

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We would get the rules, the committee would go through its process, where it would sit down, and it would organize. The first series would be simply the committee itself, would meet and organize. All these Members are now on the committee. The majority staff would meet separate from the minority. And they would select and choose and organize into subcommittees. And they would set the ratios on those subcommittees by the number of majority Members that wanted those particular subcommittees. So there might be ten on one, seven on another, five on one. And that would set the ratio for the minority. Big boards in the back of the room, each board had a subcommittee on it. This side was filled in, this side had five blanks or four blanks. The Republican Members, or the minority Members, whoever they were at the time, would come in, see the board, look at the jurisdictions, look at the titles that had already been set by the full committee, the majority staff, and they would choose sides. Usually they'd go around in order or seniority, just like a roll call sheet. Mr. So-and-so, which subcommittee would you like? And they would become Ranking Members on those subcommittees. And then they'd trade off. There's only one spot left. Does anybody want to switch with that subcommittee so I can get on that one? And it was all behind just the Members meeting. In most cases, there was no transcript, so it was just kind of a meeting, nothing was put on record. Then after all that was done, the committee would have a formal sit down, where they would vote on the rules, they would vote on the memberships on the subcommittees, they would define who the Ranking Members were on those subcommittees, and introduced the staff. And that would be the official thing that would make it into a transcript, the official meeting, the organization meeting. And then we'd start business.